



CATAWBA COUNTY

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Department of Social Services

PRESS RELEASE

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Sunday will be fun-day at Open House for Children's Advocacy Center Tour historic Bolick House, home to CAC on September 14

The public is invited to an Open House on Sunday, September 14, to help celebrate the new home of the Children's Advocacy Center. The Open House will be from 2 p.m. until 4 p.m., with the Dedication Ceremony at 2:30 p.m. The Children's Advocacy Center is located at 1007 1st Avenue South (Highway 16), Conover.



"The event is sure to be pleasing to adults and youth alike," says Christina Abbott, director of the Children's Advocacy Center. "We'll have clowns, balloons, face painting and other fun activities for the kids. And adults can visit the information tents of the CAC, Children's Protection Council, Catawba County Parenting Network and Catawba County Emergency Medical Services. Everyone can enjoy tours of our new building, along with refreshments."



The **Children's Advocacy Center of Catawba County**, founded in 1998, aims to minimize the trauma a child can suffer during a criminal child abuse investigation and expedite the prosecution of sex offenders. The Center is designed to enhance coordination of efforts between Social Services, law enforcement, the district attorney's office, medical and mental health professionals, and others involved with the child victim during an investigation and subsequent court proceedings. An interview room is equipped to record the victim child's statements during an interview. In addition, law enforcement, the district attorney's office and others involved in the investigation are able to speak to the interviewer through an earpiece to communicate questions. This approach allows the child victim to tell his or her story only once in a safe, comforting, private environment; and allows all parties involved in the treatment and investigation to gather information needed from the victim without overwhelming the child.

An added benefit of the new CAC facility is a medical examination room. This allows a medical professional to examine the victim and gather physical evidence of the alleged assault. Everything to begin the process of treatment and investigation can occur at the Children's Advocacy Center.

MORE



Young Marion and her nephew James on front steps of Bolick House.

The Child Advocacy Center is located in the Bolick House in Conover. The Bolick House was originally constructed in the 1930s by Herman Sipe, a well-known contractor in the area. D. Edgar and Pinkie Forney Bolick were the original owners. Their daughters, Evelyn Wanzer and Marion Mebane, still live in the area. They recall many happy times riding bikes, roller-skating, playing under the old oaks, and watching the train pass behind their home.

Jerome Bolick, cousin of the sisters, acquired the home in 1985. The oldest structure on the Bolick property is the original foundry of the buggy business owned by Jerome Bolick, grandfather of Jerome Bolick, Mrs. Wanzer and Mrs. Mebane.

In spring 2003, Mr. Bolick offered the house to Catawba County to be used as the Children's Advocacy Center for children who have suffered from sexual or severe physical abuse.

Two other agencies that support and protect children are co-located in the Bolick House with the Children's Advocacy Center. **Catawba County Parenting Network** offers a one-stop shopping approach to families needing parenting resources and programs, and provides a streamlined approach to accessing services. Twenty-five community agencies are involved in the planning, development and evaluation of parenting programs across Catawba County. Services can range from parenting resources and referrals of books, web sites and research to one-on-one support. The Parenting Network aims to reduce waiting lists for parenting programs; link services together; eliminate duplication of services; and inform parents of programs available.

Children's Protection Council, founded in 1975, is also located with the Children's Advocacy Center. The CPC is an all-volunteer organization whose main purpose is to PREVENT child abuse and neglect.

It meets monthly to plan and implement strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect; arranges public meetings and workshops about child abuse and neglect; develops public awareness and provides public education and information; and sponsors the annual Hancock Settlemyre Award banquet and Child Fatality Vigil, remembering those children who have died last year from child abuse or neglect in North Carolina.

Over 3,000 children were involved in Child Protective Services investigations in 2002 in Catawba County. The most frequent types of maltreatment were inadequate supervision (42%), injurious environment due to drug and alcohol issues (29%), and injurious environment due to domestic violence (18%).

Sexual maltreatment investigations made up 10 percent of all investigations. There are two categories of sexual maltreatment reports. In 2002, there were 79 investigations of sexual maltreatment involving a parent or caretaker (4%) and 96 investigations of lack of supervision resulting in sexual victimization of a child (6%).

The Children's Advocacy Center and its partners wish to increase awareness that child sexual victimization is a reality in Catawba County. To fight this abhorrent crime, all citizens must be aware that it exists, know what signs to look for, and understand how to report suspected cases. For more information, attend the Open House on Sunday, September 14, or contact the Children's Advocacy Center at 828-465-9296. Join us in creating brighter futures for all children in our community.